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Set	Items	Description
S1	191	TICKER (5N) DISPLAY
S2	104	S1 AND PRIC?
S3	67	S2 NOT PY>1999
S4	12	S3 AND (PRIC? (6N) TICKER)
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7/9/6 (Item 3 from file: 47)

DIALOG(R)File 47:Gale Group Magazine DB(TM)

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04805367 SUPPLIER NUMBER: 19684913 (THIS IS THE FULL TEXT)

Invasion of the Webcasters. (10 push applications are compared) (includes related articles on handling network traffic, intranet Webcasters, free Webcasters, and a comparison of the push components in Navigator 4.0 and Internet Explorer 4.0) (Internet/Web/Online Service Information)

Robb, JoAnne; Nilsson, B. A.

PC World, v15, n9, p204(9)

Sep, 1997

ISSN: 0737-8939 LANGUAGE: English RECORD TYPE: Fulltext; Abstract

WORD COUNT: 5783 LINE COUNT: 00446

ABSTRACT: Webcasters, or push applications, will now deliver specified Web content direct to the user's desktop. Microsoft's Internet Explorer 4.0 and Netscape's Navigator 4.0 will offer push components by the end of summer 1997. Around 30 other push products are available, most of them free of charge. The user selects the data channels and establishes an update schedule, and the Webcasters poll servers for changes. New information is automatically downloaded to the user's system. This can be in the form of complete HTML pages or headline links that take the user to the Web site. News can also appear on the desktop in the form of pop-up boxes, screen savers or scrolling tickers. The best of 10 Webcasters examined are BackWeb 2.0, BackWeb Headliner 1.0.1, Intermind Communicator 1.51 and PointCast Network 2.0.

TEXT:

Webcasters push news, stock quotes, software, horoscopes, and commercials directly to your PC's screen.

We tuned in to 10 of them.

Here's our take.

Remember the good old days, when a newspaper landed on your front doorstep and you actually had time to read it? Now because of the Internet, the daily rag you subscribe to and hundreds of other newspapers--not to mention all kinds of other information and entertainment--are available online at any time of the day or night. Talk about pressure! Not only has your anxiety over staying abreast of current events quadrupled, you have no idea what to read first.

The solution? Webcasters--also called push applications--can deliver the news you want right to your desktop. No more scanning news headlines in half a dozen online publications before you find what you want to read. No more continually checking your stock portfolio so you can sell at the perfect moment. Using channels--streams of information from Web sources, such as the New York Times or Wall Street Journal sites--Webcasters send headlines or entire articles to your desktop as ticker tape or screen savers. You can get the latest news from Washington, the weather in San Diego, and basketball scores from Chicago, all served up on your screen and updated as often as every 30 minutes.

Webcasters have become such hot properties that Microsoft and Netscape are using them as yet another weapon in their ongoing battle for dominance in the Web browser market. Microsoft's Internet Explorer 4.0 and Netscape's Navigator 4.0 should both have built-in Webcasting components by the end of summer. (See "Channeling the Desktop" for a preview of these Webcasters.)

Meanwhile, about 30 other push products are jockeying for your attention. Almost all are free, so you can download and try out as many as you want without spending a dime. But most of them aren't that great. We looked at ten of the more interesting ones, and picked four to cover in depth. They include PointCast Network and BackWeb, two of the most popular

push products, according to research firm International Data Corporation. We also looked at Headliner, the best of the headline-only Webcasters here, and Intermind Communicator, which delivers content to your browser. (For minireviews of the remaining push products, see "Shovin' It to Ya.")

Marimba's Castanet is another big name in the world of push products, but we don't review it because its primary function is to deliver software, not news. (BackWeb does both.) Castanet is available as a stand-alone push product, and it will also be integrated into the Netscape Navigator browser.

We tested all the products by downloading them from the Internet, setting them up on a T1 connection on a Pentium-133 with 16MB of RAM and subscribing to a few channels. We evaluated each program's interface, its screen size, and the quality of the information. We also noted how often the Webcasters updated information and whether they let us determine the amount of space downloads would take up on our hard drive. Finally, we ran them alongside other applications to see how much they interfered with our regular work, if at all.

Our recommendation? Its ads are some of the most annoying of any Webcaster's, but PointCast does take the guesswork out of getting top-quality news channels and information. You can receive news from recognized sources like CNN, Pathfinder, and the New York Times. Headliner was another favorite, but just as we were going to press, BackWeb announced that it had purchased Lanacom and planned to integrate Headliner into the BackWeb product. Since Headliner will be available as a stand-alone product through the beginning of October, we still review it on its own. However, we didn't think it would be fair to give it our highest recommendation, since we don't know how the new BackWeb/Headliner combo--due out in the fall--will look.

News on Demand

How do push programs work? They use technology that's better described as "smart pull." You decide on the channels and update schedule you want. Then the programs use that information to poll Web servers for changes and automatically pull down new information to your screen. Depending on the Webcaster (and the Web site being accessed), an entire HTML page complete with graphics might be saved to your hard drive and viewed through your browser. Or you may get a headline link that takes you back to the original Web site when you click on it. Many products save space on your hard drive by leaving out some graphics.

News can appear on your desktop in a variety of forms, such as pop-up boxes, but the two most popular options Webcasters offer are scrolling tickers and screen savers. We liked tickers a lot--at first. They gave us a real feel of being in the thick of the news, but we eventually had to switch to screen savers. The tickers' never-ending march of headlines across the screen drove us crazy after we had used them for a while.

Most Webcasters update no more than once every 30 minutes, and others have channels that update only once a week. If your Webcaster is smart, like PointCast, it won't update unless there are changes--no matter how often you've set the channels to refresh.

Content is the biggest differentiator among Webcasters, but don't confuse the number of channels with quality. For instance, PointCast offers only 25 channels, but each one has many subsections: If you subscribe to CNN, for example, you can then choose among topics ranging from world news to the latest on health. Interface can make a big difference in how useful a Webcaster is, too. For instance, Headliner offers a seemingly overwhelming number of channels--more than 700--but they're neatly arranged in categories such as Business, Lifestyle, and Travel. We had no problem finding what we were looking for.

Staying Informed, and Working, Too

With all the different approaches Webcasters take, developing tests wasn't easy. We finally settled on this general procedure: For each

Webcaster, we subscribed to three popular channels--generally business news, weather, and financial information channels--and set updates for every 30 minutes. (If the product couldn't update every half hour, we chose the next closest interval.) To test whether the Webcasters interfered with work in other applications, we performed common tasks--like a mail merge in Microsoft Word and a name search in Lotus Organizer--and timed how long they took with and without the Webcaster working in the background.

On average, Webcasters didn't slow us down much--only about 2 percent. BackWeb won't slow you at all: Unlike Webcasters that consume part of your bandwidth when downloading, BackWeb works only when you're not using your line. (Most products split your connection; they take part of the bandwidth for downloads and leave you the rest for your online activities.) BackWeb also sends its downloads in small chunks--512 bytes, to be exact. That way, if a download is interrupted--while you check your e-mail, say--it can pick up where it left off.

The Future of Webcasting

Webcasters are evolving into more than single-purpose products that pull news off the Web. For instance, BackWeb is working with companies such as McAfee and Diamond Multimedia to send software updates to your PC. AirMedia, which broadcasts news wirelessly to desktops via NewsCatcher, a pyramid-shaped receiver, will be offering a mobile version by September. The new receiver looks like a futuristic pager and attaches to your notebook to display updates. PointCast is planning special push services for targeted markets, like college students and government employees.

Many Webcasting products also come in intranet versions so companies can send information to their own employees' desktops. Soon, you may have no excuse for ignoring the latest form from HR--instead of getting lost under a hundred e-mails, it will be displayed on your screen, just like any other news update (see "Pushing the Company Line").

Extra, Extra

A beep signaling that more news has just landed on your desktop may never give you the same old-fashioned feeling of being in the know the way a newspaper's thwack on the porch does. But if your professional or personal happiness depends on keeping up with the very latest news, Webcasters are the way to go. They're distracting, they litter your hard drive with old stories about Beijing, and some come with annoying ads. But they're also easier (and cheaper) to subscribe to than traditional papers, the information is even more diverse, and they can be downright fun. Best of all? You don't even have to tip the neighborhood carrier.

Recommended

PointCast, Available Free as a stand-alone Webcaster and soon in Microsoft's Internet Explorer 4.0 browser, delivers some of the best news content on the Web. The interface is well organized, so you don't have to hunt through an endless number of channels to find what you want. Our only beefs: The animated ads that jump in the corner of your screen saver can be distracting, and PointCast gives you no control over how much hard drive space its full-story downloads eat up. (The company estimates that you'll need to allot about 10MB for both the product and all its stories.)

BACKWEB 2.0

* www.backweb.com

PRO: Downloads software; downloads don't interfere with other online activities

CON: Fewer channels than most, InfoFlash delivery is distracting

Content may be king for most Webcasters, but others are taking push in new directions: They're pushing actual applications--not just news or stock quotes--to your PC. BackWeb is one product that delivers apps--and it's the only product that can send content as well as applications. That means you can get Wall Street Journal articles along with new modem drivers or the latest virus software update.

Compared to most other push programs, BackWeb offers relatively few

channels--only about 45. In addition to some limited news channels, including Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition and Infoseek, you can choose from several computer publication sites like IDG.net and CMP Techweb. If you're in the mood for a little entertainment, there's everything from Boston's PBS station, which offers updates from Nova online, to JamTV, where you'll find a weekly magazine, tour schedules for dozens of artists, and CD previews.

You can pick from several types of delivery, depending on the options the content providers give you: screen savers, wallpaper (good for options like the Weather Channel, which sends a satellite map of the United States), or InfoFlashes (moving windows about the size of a headline ticker). We found InfoFlashes, which are usually animated and sometimes cross the line into advertising, too distracting. During our tests, an InfoFlash from Volvo startled us by popping up with a picture of the interior of a new car.

Unlike most other push applications, which are limited to text or text and photos, BackWeb can deliver almost anything a content provider wants to send, including audio files, TV and movie clips, and software demos. Vendors you can subscribe to include Diamond Multimedia, which distributes modem and graphics board drivers through BackWeb; Expert Software (a company that sells home remodeling and SOHO titles), which previews its newest CD-ROMs and will then download the full program, if you want it; and McAfee SecureCast, which updates the VirusScan signature files. Software Inbox Direct, an Internet-based company that distributes software, sends a new shareware, freeware, or demo program every week. When new versions of any of these drivers or programs become available, BackWeb automatically sends them to you, unless you tell it not to.

BackWeb handles updates and hard disk allocation sensibly. Downloads take place in the background of your online session, waiting until you're not transferring any other information. If you log off before a download completes, BackWeb will pick up where it left off when you go online again. It also lets you control the amount of disk space used by each channel. You can't set the frequency of updates, however; when you sign up for each channel, you'll get information about how often it will send new information.

We predict that as the Internet grows, more people will want their software delivered electronically. By getting a head start now with its limited software and driver delivery, BackWeb could have a bright future in the software update department. And when BackWeb folds Headliner into its product, it should also have an abundant array of content choices. But, for now, if you're looking for a variety of hard-hitting news channels, you're still better off with a product like PointCast.

BACKWEB HEADLINER 1.0.1

* www.backweb.com

PRO: Saves hard drive space by sending only headlines and story summaries, well-organized interface

CON: Scrolling ticker at top of screen can be distracting

True to its name, BackWeb's Headliner sends you only headlines, thus saving hard disk space. You track the headlines from a ticker that runs across your screen or read a brief summary from the screen saver. Either way, if you see a headline that intrigues you, a click on it links you to the Internet. (Headliner will launch your browser for you if it's not already open, but expect a brief wait.) By reading your news online, you won't fill your hard drive with lengthy news stories.

Headliner offers more than 700 channels from content providers ranging from news sources like Reuters International, USA Today, and MSNBC WorldNews, to fluffy but fun downloads like David Letterman's Top Ten List. Despite the overwhelming number of channels, they're organized into 24 categories, so it's easy to browse and choose the ones you want to receive.

If you choose channels from different categories, you'll see those

categories as tabs on your screen saver or as menu options on your ticker. By default, the ticker or screen saver will cycle through all of the channels you've picked, but if you want to check your investment portfolio, say, then you just select the Stock Quotes tab for an immediate update.

Headliner also lets you fine-tune your news delivery more than many of the other Webcasters allow you to: For example, you can tell Headliner to send you an alert if it finds a particular word in a story or if a stock hits a certain price. You can set the alert to beep or have Headliner download an entire article so you can read it offline. And you can even set up Headliner to page you with an alert. There are still other customization options. For instance, if you're viewing your news in the ticker, you can change the font and the speed at which the headlines scroll across your screen.

Overall, Headliner is an elegant product that delivers a wide choice of different content without using up too much of your precious system resources.

INTERMIND COMMUNICATOR 1.51

* www.intermind.com

PRO: Variety of channels with emphasis on technical support

CON: Interface is somewhat confusing, channels don't update often enough

Intermind can't match the breadth of daily news that competitors like PointCast and Headliner offer. But you might find this Webcaster worth setting up if you like off-the-wall channels or own products from any of the half-dozen computer companies that offer technical support channels through Intermind's Webcaster.

Intermind's content providers are an eclectic group. The 200 channels range from the newsworthy (CBS News Up-to-the-Minute) to the technical (product support information from Novell, Macromedia, and Epson, among others), to the arcane (astrology, model railroading, Biblical prophecy).

Intermind does a good job of organizing this hodgepodge into eight broad categories. You subscribe to channels through a listing on Intermind's Web site, then view headlines or both headlines and summaries in a customized browser window that's been saved to your hard drive. Unfortunately, navigating through the browser window is not as streamlined as it could be--the window is designed with frames that actually make information harder to find. To read a complete story, just click on the headline. If a story is cached to your hard drive (the channel provider decides whether to send the whole story or not), it will appear on your screen. If the story isn't cached, you'll jump out to the Internet to read it.

You won't be able to set how often new material is sent to you. Since most of the channels don't update that often, the content providers determine how often you'll receive new material. We found the lack of frequent updates a little frustrating--it was more like subscribing to a weekly magazine than a daily newspaper. What was even more irritating was that we sometimes got more updates--press release material and the like--from the Intermind company channel (which you'll get automatically) than we got from the channels that we subscribed to.

Each time material is updated, you get an audible cue. (If you don't want your PC to beep at you, you can switch that off and instead have a green light shine from your taskbar when there is an update.) Unlike most push products, which limit the number of stories you get by limiting the amount of space for them on your hard drive, Intermind lets you choose the length of time a story will sit on your hard drive by selecting a number of days in the options menu.

Intermind has a few interesting advantages, particularly if you like to go online for technical support. But it's a basic product at best: It doesn't have a broad range of channels and headline news or a particularly compelling way of delivering that information.

POINTCAST NETWORK 2.0

* www.pointcast.com

PRO: Quality news, intuitive interface

CON: Advertising is distracting, can't set caching limits

Since it was the first Webcaster on the Internet in early 1996, PointCast is the granddaddy of the pack. One of the reasons it continues to be popular is the quality of its news and information. No other Webcaster can match the select group of channels it offers--17 sources including CNN, the Chicago Tribune, and the New York Times. Another reason for its popularity is its appealing interface--to subscribe to a channel, just pick and click from well-organized headings.

PointCast collects content a little differently than other Webcasters, but you probably won't notice any difference in how you receive or use its channels (we didn't). Rather than pull news from various Web sites, like most other Webcasters do, PointCast actually takes the content from its 17 primary providers and broadcasts it in compressed form from its own Web servers. Although we didn't check this, the compressed stories are supposed to use much less bandwidth as they come over your phone line or network connection. And accessing channels from PointCast's powerful servers instead of from individual Web sites is supposed to prevent access problems when a large number of people are simultaneously trying to get information from a particular channel.

Content from PointCast's primary providers appears in 25 channels, only nine of which you can subscribe to at once. It's not as limiting as it sounds, though. Each channel contains multiple subsections that you can also subscribe to once you've selected the main channels. That brings the actual number of channels available from PointCast's servers to more than 200. For instance, the CNN channel offers categories such as Politics, Health, and Technology. Subchannel subscriptions such as these show up as separate tabs in the PointCast screen saver under the primary channel.

As we went to press in July, PointCast launched Connections, which will expand PointCast's repertoire. Connections channels will come straight from the providers' sites, instead of through PointCast's servers, and will be listed under one heading in the interface. Although PointCast couldn't tell us what kind of content the Connections channels would offer, it said hundreds of providers had already signed up--PC World Online among them. If you choose Connections as one of your channels, it won't count as one of the nine you can select. It's like a bonus channel--you'll still be able to choose another nine from the original providers.

We weren't completely happy with some of PointCast's features. For one thing, it's one of the only Webcasters with ads, animated productions that shout at you from the upper right corner of the screen saver. You can always switch to PointCast's ticker, but since tickers can be quite distracting, it's a toss-up as to which is the lesser evil. Another obvious drawback is that there's no option to get just headlines--PointCast downloads entire stories, taking up more space on your hard drive than Webcasters that send only parts of stories. (PointCast says that you should allot about 10MB of disk space for it.) We also missed being able to set how much data individual channels can cache.

If you go with Internet Explorer 4.0 as your browser, PointCast will be one of the built-in channels. If not, PointCast is worth installing anyway if news monitoring is your bag. It isn't perfect, but of all the push products we reviewed, PointCast does the best job of filtering the content of the Web if you're just interested in top--quality news and financial information.

Find links to products in this article at www.pcworld.com/sep97/push.

B. A. Nilsson is a freelance computer writer based in Glen, New York; JoAnne Robb is an associate editor and Grace Aquino an assistant editor for PC World.

RELATED ARTICLE: Channeling the Desktop

A webcaster built into your Web browser? It makes sense. But how will the Webcasters in Microsoft's and Netscape's browsers compare to the stand-alone products available today? To get an idea, we looked at the push components in a beta of Netscape's Navigator 4.0 and a beta of Microsoft's Internet Explorer 4.0.

Internet Explorer's Active Desktop and Navigator's Netcaster operate like most standard push products. Both let you allot hard drive space and set channel updates. In Active Desktop, which we saw in a demo, channels appear in a long rectangular bar down the left side of the screen. When a channel has updated content, a gleam appears by the channel name on the bar. Netcaster's updates work similarly: You'll see a flag by the channel name in its channel bar. Netcaster also offers a unique delivery option called a Webtop. Webtops are a sort of dynamic wallpaper: You can see them updating in the background while you work.

Another Standards War?

It's too early to say how good either Webcaster's content will be. At press time in July, Microsoft would confirm deals with only PointCast and MSNBC, which will come as preconfigured channels. Netcaster will come preconfigured with ten preselected channels, including Netscape's own Web site. But it will offer dozens more options in the Channel Finder section of its channel bar. When we went to press, Netscape had already lined up over 20 content providers, including familiar names like ABC News and Conde Nast. In addition, Netcaster will come with Castanet built in, so you'll be able to get Castanet apps without installing the product. Not to be outdone, Microsoft is developing the capability to distribute and update Java applications through its browser.

Exactly what content the two browsers will offer depends on which standard providers decide to follow. Microsoft's standard--Channel Definition Format (CDF)--requires content providers to add Extensible Markup Language code (closely related to HTML) to their pages. Netcaster, on the other hand, requires sites to prepare their pages with JavaScript.

Your Webcaster of choice might depend on your operating system. If you use Windows 95, pick Active Desktop. It's designed to integrate smoothly with that platform. But if you don't use Windows 95, or need a Webcaster that will work with multiple operating systems across a corporate intranet, choose Netcaster. Since it uses Java VM, it will work on any platform. The downside is that it may be slower because it's not optimized for a particular operating system. If you don't use Windows 95, though, Netcaster could be your only choice: Microsoft won't say when Active Desktop will be ready for any other platform.

RELATED ARTICLE: Shovin' It to Ya

The internet is overrun with free Webcasters. Which are worth the download time?

In addition to the four Webcasters we chose for in-depth review, we picked several others that we liked. They're all free, and you can link to any of them from PC World's site (www.pcworld.com/sep97/push).

Many Webcasters work like Headliner: You pick stories from headlines that are sent to your screen. None of the other headline-based Webcasters we cover--Downtown (www.incommon.com), WebSprite (www.dvorak.com), and IBM NewsTicker (infomarket.ibm.com/ht3/ticker.shtml)--have a screen saver option, in case you find scrolling tickers distracting. But if you're a ticker fan, you should check them out. Downtown has two dozen channels from reputable sources like the Los Angeles Times; each channel we chose showed up in its own section of the Downtown taskbar. To see the headlines from a particular channel, you just click on the section of the taskbar that's designated for the channel. Pick a headline and you'll link to the Web to read the story. WebSprite has content similar to Downtown, but leans more heavily toward business and financial headlines. WebSprite is really simple, without any extra buttons or fancy gadgets--though you can give each channel its own typeface color or background. IBM NewsTicker, our

final ticker choice, is all hard-core news. Channels are available from a small selection of business-oriented Web-based news services.

Want your news delivered on the wings of flying toasters? Then check out After Dark Online (www.afterdark.com), brought to you by the same folks who make the screen savers. After Dark Online brings you six channels, including USA Today. Animations accompany information as it flashes across your screen saver; not surprisingly, After Dark's animations are often more interesting than the news they bring.

If you don't want to peer at screen savers, have your news delivered via e-mail instead: Digital Bindery (www.bindery.com) lets you choose Web pages you want to track and then e-mails the changes to you.

More worried about a particular kind of content than the way it's delivered? AlphaConnect StockVue (www.alphaconnect.com) does stocks. Period. It tracks your portfolio and sends the information to your desktop in easy-to-read displays. If you're really neurotic about your finances, you can set it to page you when your stock hits a certain value. You can't be more connected than that.

RELATED ARTICLE: Pushing the Company Line

Your company intranet may be the logical place to post the latest sales report, but that doesn't mean anyone goes there to read it. If you want to make sure corporate news is getting its fair share of space on users' desktops, you may want to consider an intranet Webcaster. Like Internet push applications, Webcasters for intranets use screen savers, tickers, and the like to flash new information from your company Web site on employees' screens.

We tested four intranet Webcasters: BackWeb, Marimba's Castanet Transmitter, Wayfarer's Incisa, and PointCast's I-Server. We installed each on a Pentium-166 running Windows NT 4.0 and on four PCs running Windows 95. Our "channel" was a corporate HTML Web page we created. To test Castanet, which downloads only applications, we sent sample Java apps across to the PCs. At press time, Incisa couldn't track changes in intranet Web pages. Instead, we looked at its ability to send messages directly to client desktops.

Incisa was the easiest to install: We breezed through a series of point-and-click windows. BackWeb was the most difficult to set up. To get it running, you'll need a rudimentary knowledge of programming and an in-depth understanding of your LAN.

As with Internet Webcasters, each product has a different way of delivering messages to employee screens. BackWeb and PointCast both monitor your intranet page and notify employees of a change the same way they do on the Internet versions: BackWeb shows updates in screen savers or InfoFlashes. PointCast news shows up in screen savers or tickers. When we looked at Incisa, it didn't monitor corporate Web pages, but by the time you read this a new version will be out that the company says will have that function. We still liked the ease with which we could compose messages with Incisa and direct them to specific desktops at specific times in pop-up windows.

Like its Internet counterpart, Castanet Transmitter for intranets is a different beast than other Webcasters: It focuses on distribution of Java-based applications. The advantage of this is that you can distribute the same Java software to a variety of different platforms in a company. (At press time, Castanet was adding the ability to send software written in languages other than Java.) Castanet can also upgrade applications by sending only the new code, which saves employees from downloading the whole application again.

BackWeb can distribute programs as well--and it also can sense which parts of a program have changed so it sends you only the updated section. Unlike Castanet, however, BackWeb can also monitor Web pages, so it's the best pick if you need to do both.

If you want your employees to use only one Webcaster for both Internet

and intranet use, PointCast and BackWeb are your best bets. They're both capable of tracking the same Web information as their Internet-only versions. (According to the company, you will soon be able to use BackWeb's server to turn any Web site into a channel. Once you define a new channel with this powerful tool, story headlines can be sent to client desktops, even if the content provider isn't one of the available BackWeb channels.) Incisa's forthcoming version promises to track Web information as well.

These intranet products can also keep network traffic to a minimum. PointCast's I-Server is a good example: If 50 employees monitor CNN's channel, only one copy of an update is downloaded to the server, which then distributes it to all the subscribers. If you're not crazy about the idea of your employees using the company intranet server to monitor Internet sites, you can configure BackWeb to restrict access to handpicked channels or cut off access to the Internet altogether. By the time you read this, PointCast should be able to restrict access to particular sites as well.

As we went to press in July, PointCast borrowed a tactic from Microsoft and began offering its intranet Webcaster for free. The "new" I-Server splits the old I-Server's capabilities into two new products--PointCast Caching Manager and PointCast Corporate Broadcast Manager--and adds a new component, PointCast Administrator. The only drawback: You'll get PointCast's ads along with the content. PointCast Administrator allows an IS department to filter some channels and some ads from Web downloads--but they still can't get rid of all the ads. (To turn off Internet channels and ads completely, you'll have to buy PointCast Added Control. At press time, PointCast didn't know how much this product would cost.) Still, considering other intranet servers range in price from \$1000 for 100 users for Castanet to \$10,000 for 250 users for BackWeb, the ads are a price we'd bet most companies would be willing to pay.

RELATED ARTICLE: Jamming Through Network Traffic

Are webcasters causing a traffic jam on corporate America's networks? Lots of companies have a sneaking suspicion they are, but few have the hard data to prove it. When Webcasters first appeared on the Internet, some companies--like Hewlett Packard--asked their employees to think twice before using something like PointCast, which sends entire stories to your hard drive.

Is it paranoia or practicality? Probably a little of both. Products like Headliner send only headlines, so their impact on corporate networks is small. But products like PointCast, which download larger content files, should and do worry corporate IS managers.

"IS hates this technology," claims Albert Behr, vice president of product marketing for Sequel Technology, which makes an Internet monitoring product. "Someone downloads a copy of PointCast, and pretty soon almost everyone is using it, and then there's this huge spike on the network."

To avoid being shut out of corporations, Webcasting software manufacturers are looking for ways to let users get smaller packages of information. For instance, if several news stories all use the same photo, PointCast will send only one copy to your hard drive, so other data have more room on corporate lines.

Several companies like PointCast and BackWeb have developed server products to help alleviate the bandwidth strain. (See "Pushing the Company Line.") Does this approach work? It does for Houston Industries, an electric utility company in Texas that uses PointCast's I-Server. According to Bob Bertrand, a systems analyst with the company, over 80 percent of hits now come from cache instead of clogging bandwidth by pulling directly from the Internet. ---Grace Aquino

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SPECIAL FEATURES: table; illustration

DESCRIPTORS: World Wide Web--Services

FILE SEGMENT: CD File 275

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TS7/9/1 6

7/9/1 (Item 1 from file: 16)

DIALOG(R)File 16:Gale Group PROMT(R)

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04924875 Supplier Number: 47239254 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)

After Dark Online version 2.0 now available at www.afterdark.com; Berkeley Systems' free push-technology now even easier to use.

Business Wire, p03251117

March 25, 1997

Language: English Record Type: Fulltext

Document Type: Newswire; Trade

Word Count: 717

TEXT:

BERKELEY, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--March 25, 1997--Berkeley Systems, Inc., a leader in online entertainment and the consumer software market, today released After Dark Online 2.0, the new update to its popular automatic Internet news delivery system.

After Dark Online 2.0 now contains QuickRead, a handy feature that allows users to read the entire news story within the screen saver before launching the browser to go online, and Channel Navigator, familiar VCR-like navigation controls that provide easy control of channels and news updates.

Available for free download at www.afterdark.com, After Dark Online 2.0 is a stand-alone collection of screen savers that broadcasts news and information to the desktop from top branded national news, sports, financial, entertainment, and computer industry sources along with stock quotes, and sports scores. Berkeley has partnered with Data Broadcasting Corporation, E! Online, Sports Illustrated Online, USA TODAY, The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition and ZD Net to deliver the best in automatic Internet news delivery.

"We've added new features to After Dark Online to make it even easier for the general consumer to use," stated Julie Wainwright, President and CEO of Berkeley Systems. "And, by offering content from a wide array of news sources, such as DBC, E! Online, Sports Illustrated Online, USA TODAY, The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition and ZD Net, After Dark Online continues to offer the best in consumer Internet news delivery."

After Dark Online's new QuickRead feature offers consumers easy access to today's hottest stories without launching their browser. When viewing any of After Dark Online's channels, users can now read the stories behind the headlines with a simple click of the mouse, eliminating the need to go online or interrupt channel viewership.

By moving the cursor over the headlines, users are alerted to additional text when the cursor changes to be a "hand-over-paper." Then, the user need only click on the text to read the story. Another click of the mouse will launch the user's browser and bring him or her to the corresponding content provider's site for related articles and features.

After Dark Online 2.0 also offers simplified control of the news channels with Channel Navigator. This enables users to: pause the screen saver, flip through the "pages" of the screen saver (much like browsing through a magazine), change news sources, and launch the downloader to update the news. Residing on the ticker tape, this control device automatically appears on-screen at a simple movement of the mouse. Or, users can use the up and down arrow keys on the keyboard to perform the same functions.

This new version of After Dark Online features additional options like adjustable speed control of the ticker tape, which has been updated to support mutual funds and stock indices, and a more customizable download schedule. Designed to run on 14.4 modems, After Dark Online is also

backwards compatible with all members of the After Dark product family, so users can enjoy an entertaining mix of their After Dark animated displays and Internet news channels by selecting the popular "Randomizer" feature.

After Dark Online 2.0 is available for free download at www.afterdark.com. After Dark Online 2.0 also works with any Internet Service Provider (ISP) and is compatible with today's popular browsers.

Founded in 1987, Berkeley Systems, Inc. develops and markets multimedia entertainment software for grown-ups. To date, the privately held Company has sold over 5 million units and is a leading innovator in the marketplace. Leveraging the success of its widely known After Dark screen saver franchise, Berkeley Systems established a second franchise with the irreverent pop-culture trivia game You Don't Know Jack.

The Company recently announced plans to deliver breakthrough entertainment experiences on the Internet with beZerk (www.bezerk.com), the premier online entertainment network. With an eye on the future, Berkeley Systems continues to produce cutting-edge entertainment that offers unique experiences and takes advantage of the latest technology and online advancements. -0-

Note to Editors: Screen shots and electronic images are available upon request. For more information, please contact DeEtte Christie at 510/540-5535 ext. 254 or Monica Granados, ext. 204, or pr@berksys.com. Additional information is available at <http://www.berkeleysystems.com>.

CONTACT: Berkeley Systems, Inc.

DeEtte Christie or Monica Granados, 510/540-5535 x.254
pr@berksys.com

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PUBLISHER NAME: Business Wire

COMPANY NAMES: *Berkeley Systems Inc.

EVENT NAMES: *336 (Product introduction)

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES: *1USA (United States)

PRODUCT NAMES: *7372452 (Desktop Video Software)

INDUSTRY NAMES: BUS (Business, General); BUSN (Any type of business)

NAICS CODES: 51121 (Software Publishers)

SPECIAL FEATURES: COMPANY

4/9/9 (Item 2 from file: 148)

DIALOG(R)File 148:Gale Group Trade & Industry DB
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09040703 SUPPLIER NUMBER: 18783633 (THIS IS THE FULL TEXT)
**After Dark 4.0 moonlights online. (Berkeley Systems' screen saver
collection also brings new from Internet to the desktop) (Product
Announcement) (Brief Article)**

Cortinas, Marty

MacWEEK, v10, n40, p28(1)

Oct 21, 1996

DOCUMENT TYPE: Product Announcement Brief Article ISSN: 0892-8118

LANGUAGE: English RECORD TYPE: Fulltext

WORD COUNT: 238 LINE COUNT: 00022

TEXT:

Berkeley Systems Inc. is aiming to make screen savers more than just pretty pictures with the release this month of After Dark 4.0.

The new version features After Dark Online, a collection of screen savers that brings news from the Internet to the desktop. After Dark Online features financial, sports, general and computer news from Data Broadcasting Corp., Sports Illustrated, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal and ZD Net (which is published by MacWEEK's parent company). Berkeley Systems said it will inform users of new channels or content providers as news is downloaded.

After Dark Online automatically connects Berkeley Systems' server to download current news, which is displayed when the screen saver is running, similar to the way news is displayed in the PointCast news broadcasting system from PointCast Inc. of Cupertino, Calif.

After Dark Online has a customizable scrolling ticker that can display stock prices and sports scores. Users can also click on stories to display the full text in their Web browsers.

After Dark 4.0, which includes more than 20 new modules as well as After Dark Online, has an estimated street price of \$30. After Dark Online, which includes the After Dark 4.0 engine and the news channel module, can be downloaded free from <http://www.afterdark.com>.

Berkeley Systems Inc. of Berkeley, Calif., can be reached at (510) 540-5535; fax (510) 540-5630; <http://www.berksys.com>.

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SPECIAL FEATURES: illustration; other

COMPANY NAMES: Berkeley Systems Inc.--Product introduction

INDUSTRY CODES/NAMES: CMPT Computers and Office Automation; BUSN Any type of business

DESCRIPTORS: Computer software industry--Product introduction; Utility programs--Product introduction

PRODUCT/INDUSTRY NAMES: 7372540 (Systems Utilities Software Pkgs)

SIC CODES: 7372 Prepackaged software

TRADE NAMES: After Dark 4.0 (Screen saver)--Product introduction

FILE SEGMENT: CD File 275

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